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Recd 4 Aug. 80

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036

July 31, 1980

The Honorable
Don Edwards
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Sir:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 26, 1980 concerning the wishes of some people to depart from East Timor to Portugal and Australia, of which I just received information from Jakarta.

As you are aware, the matter is also gaining serious attention from the Indonesian Government on humanitarian ground. While the issue of family reunion to Australia have been solved through understanding signed between the Australian and Indonesian Governments in 1978, the issue with the Portugal is more complicated since Portugal and Indonesia have no diplomatic relation and the capacity as well as the willingness of the Portuguese Government to receive their former subjects seems to be rather limited.

The Indonesian Government has been attemping to solve the problem through the intermediary of the Governments of the Netherlands and France, but so far have not been able to reach satisfactory arrangements.

Indonesia further embarked other efforts in solving this issue by requesting the good offices of ICRC to confer with the Portuguese Government on the possibility of accepting around 3000 persons for family reunion with the East Timorese who are already living in Portugal.

On December 9, 1979, ICRC discussed the matter with the Portuguese Red Cross and reports the results as follows:

(i) The Portuguese Government is reluctant to receive more people from East Timor on the ground that at present the Portuguese Government is facing problems to resettle around 1.5 million people from Angola, Mozambique and the people from East Timor who are already living in Portugal.

(ii) The only possibility is that the Portuguese Government may be willing to receive around 200 persons but they will be processed on a selective basis after having determined that their families are really living in Portugal.

Currently, Indonesia is still excerting efforts to find any available avenue to solve the matter. Meanwhile, your positive attitude and concerns toward the solution of the problem would be appreciated and I sincerely believe that it would play a constructive role in seeking the solution to the matter.

With my best regards,

Sincerely yours,

D. Ashari
Ambassador